

**Sunday, April 24, 2022 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church
Second Sunday of Easter**

**Bible Study –Acts 5:27-32
“We Are Witnesses”**

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes)

In groups of two or three, respond to the following, “Who is the person(s) you most allow to shape who you are and/or what you do?”

Acts 5:27-32 Context. The book of Acts, which tells the story of what happened to the disciples and the early Christian community as it grew in the generation after the resurrection of Christ. It falls into roughly two parts: the first part describes how the disciples received the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, the Jewish feast that fell 50 days after Passover, and began preaching the good news of what God had done in Jesus by raising him from the dead as a demonstration of God’s reconciling love. The second part of Acts tells the story of Paul and the spread of Christian faith beyond the Jewish community. This week’s reading tells of some of the early deeds of the apostles, led by Peter. The temple authorities were both fearful of, and angered by, the enthusiastic reception that the people of Jerusalem had given these first Christians. One day the Sadducees, led by the high priest, had the apostles thrown in prison. But that night an angel of God had freed them from prison and instructed them to return to the Temple in the morning and continue their preaching. The next day, when the council of the Sadducees convened to sit in judgment on the apostles, they found that the apostles were no longer in prison but back at the Temple preaching. They sent guards to bring them to their meeting.

Read Acts 5:27-32

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the story?

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

Read Acts 5:27-32 again

Some reflection questions – Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

- How do you respond to authority? Willingly submit? Rebel? Disgustingly obey? Other?
- What is the difference between the proper exercise of authority and authoritarianism? [Often confused, these are far from the same thing. Authority can be likened to an author

of a book – one who speaks life into. Authoritarianism is a misuse of power that squeezes out life and freedom.] Who or what do you allow to have authority in your life?

- How are Peter and the other apostles allowing God to speak more authoritatively than the Sanhedrin (and high priest)? (Verse 29)
- How are Peter and the other apostles witnesses with more than just the words they say? How does being a witness define their life?
- How might the Holy Spirit also being a witness enable the courage and witness of Peter and the other apostles?
- How might you explain to someone who is unfamiliar with Christianity that you are a witness?

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

Prayer (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, pray the closing prayer. Ask for a volunteer to lead the group or read the following prayer in unison:

God of Empowerment, we give you thanks that you do not leave us alone but are constantly at work in the hearts and minds of all people, drawing them closer in relationship to you. We are witnesses of your grace and truth. More than that, we are not alone. You go before us. Guide us to where you are leading. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord's Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven
hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.